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EDITORIAL COMMENT



CENTRAL REGISTRIES AND THE IDLE NURSE

RECENTLY at a little gathering of kindred spirits at a Sunday night tea, one of the problems which crept into the conversation was that of the newly graduated nurse, leaving the hospital without money after her long term of service, with oftentimes many weeks to wait before securing her first case. At the same time instances were cited of nurses in our own city who for weeks must remain idle during the long summer and fall season when the health of the people of this community is especially good.

We seem to see in the various directory discussions which have taken place during the past year a possible solution of such problems of the private nurse. For instance, at the annual meeting of the New York State Nurses' Association, held in New York in October, the motion was carried that the incoming president should appoint a committee to investigate and report on the feasibility of establishing a central directory for nurses of the state of New York. In Maryland, a state registry means practically a Baltimore registry. In a state like New York, a state registry should mean more than service to the nurses of New York City.

We seem to see in the dim future a network of central registries through all the states,—one central headquarters established by each state association and under its direction and supervision, with a ramification of county registries reaching out to all the larger centres, each to cover a prescribed territory, with an interchange of information and credentials by which nurses from the idle sections can be transferred to places where they are especially needed, and where an established

club-house or hotel will make such a transfer simple and inexpensive for the nurse. This would give her a change of environment and oftentimes of climate, two factors so essentially important in the maintenance of health and enthusiasm. Then, to carry out Mrs. Robb's suggestion, these same centres would become the natural recruiting agencies for the Red Cross, for the army and navy, and for every form of institutional or social position.

We believe we are on the verge of such a movement, that the success of such registries as those controlled by the Boston Nurses' Club, the graduate nurses' associations of Washington, Cleveland, Toronto, and other cities, and of the splendidly thought-out plan about to be put into operation in Maryland, described by Miss Martin at the New York state meeting and given in this issue, justifies the taking of definite steps throughout the whole country in establishing such a chain of registries.

The one great stumbling block in all the registry discussions heretofore has been the unwillingness of small groups of women to trust one of their members for the impartial administration of the affairs of the registry, and the plan submitted by Miss Martin of calling a nurse from another section of the country to act as registrar seems in a great degree to solve this part of the difficulty.

We seem to see in this plan new fields of occupation for the women who have spent their younger years in nursing service, who possess through experience knowledge of the needs of both the people and the nurses, who may naturally look to such positions as a means of continuing in active usefulness to their profession. We see again an opportunity in the management of club-houses for a place for still another group of women in whom the mother instinct is strong and the milk of human kindness not dried up, who would find in service to their younger fellow workers, in looking after the domestic side of the management of such clubs, a congenial occupation.

In connection with such directories, provision could be made for a credit system for the new graduate, a loan if need be, which would enable her to take the state examination promptly and to live at the club without anxiety of mind while waiting for her first case. Assistance could be given also, along the same lines, during periods of enforced idleness to those nurses whose obligations are such as to make them unable to accumulate, all on a reasonable business basis, having the welfare of the members at heart rather than as a dividend-paying corporation. Profits, if such there are, and we feel sure there would be under a wise business management, should be turned back

for better living conditions for the whole body of registered nurses and for more efficient service to the public.

In our message of a year ago we urged upon nurses of the country two definite lines of work, the first, of completing the reorganization of the national and local associations; the other, provision of some kind for care of the great middle class. The reorganization plan, as is well known, was acted upon favorably at the Minneapolis meeting, and a committee to submit recommendations for such was appointed and is now at work.

The care of the great middle class, so far as the nursing body is concerned, remains unchanged. We see in a system of state and county directories a greater possibility of meeting this need than has yet presented itself. A sliding scale would be possible with all the states acting together, or a fund might be created upon the lines of the Crerar Fund in Chicago by all the registries acting together.

What we need greatly in this country, now that our registration laws are so generally in operation, is some means of supervision over registered nurses for the control of abuses and the holding them to a general standard of ethics. It has been proven that the alumnae associations have not been able to maintain such supervision and the central directory would seem to be the natural channel through which such supervision should be exercised on such matters as the re-registration of certificates, the illegal use of the R.N., etc., which at the present time are hard to locate and follow.

TWO INSTRUCTIVE CONVENTIONS

THE quiet city of Rochester was enlivened during the second week in November by two conventions of great interest, that of the State Federation of Women's Clubs, and of the State Health Officers. It was also the busy time of the month in the JOURNAL office, so that the editors could not attend many of the sessions, but they found much of value in those papers and discussions they did hear. We give some points which may be of value to the members of our societies.

The delegates to the Federation wore badges much like those we have at our national meetings, but with a little frame 2 inches long and three-fourth inch wide at the top in which was a card with the wearer's name and to which the pin was attached. This helped the identification of individuals. The hall was decorated with peace flags, which were new to us. The international peace flag has a white ground with a rainbow stripe diagonally across it, thus combining the colors of the flags of the world. Each country has for its individual peace

flag its own flag, set on a white ground, with pennants floating at the top, one of which bears the words in gold letters on a white ground "Peace to all Nations."

There was, as always in such places, a great deal of disturbance by whispering in the audience and by continual passing in and out during the reading of papers. It would be well at such times to adopt the rule of some churches and admit late comers only after each item on the program is finished, not trying to continue the session until all are seated.

Several familiar sounding appeals were made for better support of the state and national magazines, and complaints of the few who respond when nominating blanks are sent out.

One person in giving directions to the speakers said: "Speak slowly and plainly, address both sides of the room, speak the last part of each sentence as distinctly as the first," and we would add to this, "hold the chin high and address those in the back seats."

The chairman of the press committee told of the interdependence of the clubs and the press and made a plea for mutual courtesies. In regard to the attitude of the individual woman toward publicity, she said: "Do not seek it and do not stubbornly avoid it. A woman should accept publicity if by so doing she can advance the cause for which she is working. Neither run toward nor away from newspaper publicity; when it comes, give your story simply, then turn the subject and show your interest in something beside yourself." One practical hint in regard to preparing reports for publication was that the first paragraph should contain the gist of what one wants to say. Then if, for lack of space, the article is cut down, the important part is left.

The report on probation work in connection with the courts in New York City showed the thorough way in which the probation officers are working to help the women of the street and to lessen vice. The night court, where cases are brought speedily to justice, has been a help, and Waverly House, recently opened, gives a home for girls who have no place to go while employment is sought for them. A plea was made for a woman's court in every city.

The report on prison reform told of the great work done by Superintendent Collins, who is making the prisons places of instruction rather than of punishment alone. New York State stands almost at the head of the world in its treatment of prisoners. Although the buildings themselves are not yet all that can be desired, they are being improved, and the new prison at Bear Mountain will be a model, with enamelled cells with rounded corners, vermin proof. The lock step has

been abolished, as a man never forgets it and it marks him forever. The prisoners walk with a military step, heads erect. Shaved heads have also ceased to be seen. Stripes have been replaced by plain gray clothes, the first-, second-, or third-term men are distinguished by disks of different colors. A man cannot now come in for a second or third term and go back to the easier or pleasanter prison tasks; these are reserved for first-term men who, by good conduct, have won special privileges. A system of bars and stars marks the grade a man has reached, and the higher he goes the more privileges are granted, such as writing and receiving letters more often, receiving magazines or papers, and purchasing little comforts. Each man now has his own underclothing, marked as his, and the mess halls have been transformed by the use of white plates and bowls in place of tin. The behavior of the men in the mess halls underwent a change equal to that in the dishes when this improvement was put into effect one Thanksgiving Day.

All the prisons have a graded school system and the men all attend school for at least one hour a day. They may study not only the common branches but the languages, book-keeping, and mechanical drawing. The teachers are prisoners who are high school graduates under the supervision of outside teachers. Thus a man is prepared for something beside vice when his prison life is ended.

Tuberculosis among prisoners has been reduced 70 per cent. by sending all so affected to Dannemora, where it was found that such patients improved more rapidly than elsewhere.

There is only one prison for women in the state, with an average of one hundred inmates, who enjoy the same privileges as the men.

Dr. Rosalie Morton, of New York, outlined the plan being carried out by the women members of the American Medical Association all over the country of educating the people in hygiene and prevention of disease by the means of lectures on timely subjects. The co-operation of club women everywhere is hoped for in this campaign.

The lines of work for the year were summed up in the following resolutions: on suppressing sensational reports of crime in the press, the establishing the Children's Bureau in Washington. A third asserted that the women were willing to help on the fight to suppress the white slave traffic. Other resolutions opposed billboard indecency, favored legislation protecting the rights of women to property of husbands who die intestate, and favored the forming of hygiene committees in clubs.

At the health officers' meetings some interesting discussions were

heard on the subjects of pure milk and of the use of benzoate of soda. A college professor asserted that clean milk was an impossibility, that it would ruin the farmers to comply with the conditions necessary to produce it, and that they as well as the public should be considered. He stated that there should be different grades of milk at different prices, just as there are grades of cotton cloth. He made his arguments pleasing to the more ignorant of his hearers by telling stories which amused them, as when he described milk, which was used at a large college dining hall where four hundred women students took their meals, as having a distinct odor of the cow. "What would they have thought," he said pleasantly, "if I had told them they were drinking liquid fertilizer?"

An earnest young doctor described in detail some experiments made on a healthy man by giving him daily for two weeks new cider containing benzoate of soda, and its bad effect on the urine, his swollen face and eyes, symptoms evident even to the layman. An equally plausible talker tore this evidence to pieces, saying that the bad symptoms were due to the cider and that the benzoate of soda was not harmful, because the natural acids of the stomach neutralized it when it is used in small quantities as a preservative. Dr. Goler, well known throughout the country for his fearless work for the public health, said: "Gentlemen, the gist of the whole matter is this: do we want to be fed benzoate of soda as food?"

We do not recall any discussion of public health questions among nurses where commercial interests have been upheld at the expense of human welfare. It is this attitude which makes all progress so slow and discouraging.

MEETING OF THE SOCIETY FOR MORAL AND SANITARY PROPHYLAXIS

EVIDENCES of a steady extension of the propaganda for moral and sanitary prophylaxis were given at the opening meeting of the American society devoted to this special crusade, at the New York Academy of Medicine in October. The president's report and survey of the country showed a surprising and gratifying development of associations devoted to carrying on this work. Cities dotted across the continent to the Pacific and down to Mexico report active associations, public lectures, conferences, and a demand for instructive literature that can scarcely be kept up with. Maryland and Pennsylvania each sent a representative in person to describe the growth and work of state societies which have evidently already taken positions of great forcefulness and usefulness.

An interesting incident occurred when one of the speakers in dis-

cussion suggested that the work in a large western city might go down if a small group of men were removed. In reply a lady arose and with deep earnestness declared that the movement could never die down in that city no matter who was removed, because the whole intelligent body of women resident there was kindled with a fiery determination to carry on an unflinching warfare with the evil.

The Maryland State Society has developed an interesting line of work in going directly to young working women in their shops and factories with educational talks and warnings.

At the recent meeting of the Pennsylvania State Federation of Women's Clubs this subject formed the serious occupation of one morning's session. All these signs point to a great awakening of our people to this great moral cause.

IMPORTANT ACTION ON ALCOHOL

THE report of the twelve delegates from the United States to the International Congress on Alcoholism, held in London last July, has recently been made public. Twenty-five countries were represented by delegates, and these were unanimous in signing the findings of the congress which are summed up in the statement that alcohol is not necessary to human life and comfort, but is inimical to both. More rigid restriction of the liquor traffic was urged and an increased education of children as to the harmful effects of alcohol on the human system.

PROGRESS OF STATE REGISTRATION

WE understand that the Board of Nurse Examiners of Pennsylvania has held a protracted meeting in Philadelphia, the special work of that session being the preparation of a curriculum. The members are greatly pleased with the progress that is already being made. They feel that the bill has worked wonders in the state. A number of schools have been reorganized and others are adding to their courses of instruction, etc. This is particularly encouraging, when we remember the length and bitterness of the struggle the Pennsylvania nurses were subjected to before securing the passage of the law.

The Illinois board has drafted an excellent curriculum, printed in this JOURNAL.

In Michigan the appointing power is entirely in the hands of the governor, and the nurses have been greatly disappointed in one of the nurse members selected, Miss Galbraith, a graduate from the Butterworth Hospital in January, 1909, who, under the terms of the

law, is disqualified to serve from the fact that she has not had five years' experience in nursing as it requires. A committee from the state association drafted a resolution of protest and presented it to the governor, who very frankly stated that the substance of the law had slipped his mind, that the appointment was made to grant a request of a senator (who is a brother-in-law of Miss Galbraith), that the matter was now beyond his jurisdiction and would have to be taken up with the attorney-general. We are not yet informed what the outcome is to be. One would think that a woman with proper appreciation of the obligations of her profession would hardly wish to serve under such conditions, and we hope to hear that Miss Galbraith has relieved her associates from this embarrassing position by voluntarily withdrawing.

THE PACIFIC COAST JOURNAL

THE October number of the Pacific Coast Journal gives, in the report of the state meeting, a suggestion made by Lucy Fisher, graduate of the Cooper Hospital, of Camden, New Jersey, long a resident in San Francisco, that "the Pacific Coast Journal affiliate with the AMERICAN JOURNAL OF NURSING on broadly patriotic and economic lines," but action was deferred until another year. While such a plan might be put in operation to the great pecuniary advantage of the AMERICAN JOURNAL, we feel that such a step would be one of retrogression for the nurses of the Pacific Coast and that it would also show a great lack of appreciation of the work done by a few women in establishing that journal, especially that of the editor, Miss Cooke. The Pacific Coast Journal has been a great educator for all nurses west of the Rockies and nothing but absolute bankruptcy would, it seems to us, justify its abandonment. We do not understand that this suggestion was made because of any financial difficulties.

A CORRECTION

IN our November number, through a misunderstanding on the part of the editor, the paper on Model Tenements was credited to Miss Thornton. We wish to explain that the paper was sent in by her, but was written by Miss Gertrude Barnum, who neglected to add her signature and to whom we apologize for the error.

MISS DAVIS'S RETIREMENT

MISS M. E. P. DAVIS retired from the business management of the JOURNAL on October 1 and will soon assume her duties at the head of the central directory in Washington.

To her more than any one person the JOURNAL owes its existence. As chairman of the committee on periodical of the Associated Alumnae, she worked out the financial side of the proposition, giving of her own time, strength, and money to overcome all obstacles until the JOURNAL was fairly launched as the official organ of the association. As president of the American Journal of Nursing Company she guided its business policy, even in its minutest detail, for more than three years and until the constructive period was safely passed.

Miss Davis has been a pioneer worker in many fields, serving in the district nursing field in Boston in the early days of that work, holding a number of important hospital positions both in general hospitals and those for the insane. She has been a charter member and active worker in our organization life, and we congratulate the nurses of Washington in having secured her to further develop and broaden the usefulness of their central registry. For the first time in its history, the JOURNAL is without her guiding hand.

THE JOURNAL PURCHASE FUND

THE returns for the JOURNAL Purchase Fund are coming in so splendidly, as the result of Miss Palmer's appeal at Minneapolis, that it really begins to look as if the entire amount might be secured before the next meeting of the Associated Alumnae in June.

So far the receipts show mostly sums of money voted from the treasuries of the affiliated associations or gifts of JOURNAL stock owned by them. Just what success the associations are having with the fifty cent contributions of individuals we do not know, as these returns will very likely be the last, as the plan involves a good deal of personal effort on the part of a few people. A number of shares and some contributions received since Miss Davis's report was made up, or promised and not yet paid over, bring the amount in sight, according to our estimate, to at least forty-two shares and it seems probable that by the first of January this may be increased to fifty.

JOURNAL ownership is the one great undertaking of the Associated Alumnae of lasting and tangible form,—just as the course in Hospital Economics is the practical result of the efforts put forth by the Superintendents' Society. Each occupies an important place in nursing education and progress, but the JOURNAL reaches out in its influence more broadly over the world, serving all nurses alike as a connecting link between the lonely workers in far distant places and those in the great centres. It is the medium holding all the nurses in all the states together, enabling them to go forward on practically uniform lines. Without it

the course at Columbia could not have been so effectively developed, state registration would have been impossible to accomplish in so short a time, and the thousand and one useful and brilliant suggestions which it has been the means of heralding would have remained dormant in the minds of the originators and have been lost to the profession.

Every nurse who is a member of an affiliated society should feel it a personal obligation to contribute fifty cents to this cause. It is not an assessment, which is mandatory, but a privilege. The complete ownership by our national association is a fitting celebration for the tenth anniversary of the JOURNAL.

HOLIDAY GREETINGS

MAY the Christmas season bring happiness to each member of the JOURNAL family wherever she may be,—either by way of personal joy of a merry reunion with friends or family, forgetting all care and renewing youth, or by putting self aside in bringing Christmas cheer to the lonely and forlorn in hospital or slum or home of luxury.

In our younger days the merriment of the season is uppermost, and happy is the person who never loses her joy over the shining tree or the Christmas stocking, but as we grow older the peace and good will of the angels' first Christmas message appeal to us more deeply and we like to stop in the midst of the crowded days of the year to let peace enter our hearts, to cast out all thoughts that are unkind and uncharitable, all unfair judgment, all possible misunderstandings, to look on our fellowmen with the eyes of loving sympathy, and to let the Christ Child enter our hearts, "for Thou lov'st temples better than an inn."